PRESS RELEASE BY THE U.S. NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

NNSA ANNOUNCES REMOVAL OF MORE THAN 73 KILOGRAMS OF HIGHLY ENRICHED URANIUM FROM KAZAKHSTAN

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. National Nuclear Security Administration today announced the removal of 73.7 kilograms (162.5 pounds) of Russian-origin highly enriched uranium (HEU) "spent" nuclear fuel from Kazakhstan. The material was removed and returned to Russia by rail for storage at a secure nuclear facility in a series of four shipments between December 2008 and May 2009.

"The shipment of highly enriched uranium from Kazakhstan continues the outstanding cooperation between the NNSA and Government of Kazakhstan and is an important step forward in our national and global security," said NNSA Administrator Thomas D'Agostino. "The President has announced his intention to expand global threat reduction efforts aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and reducing the threat posed by unsecured or excess nuclear materials. This effort is a cornerstone of our nuclear security agenda. We look forward to building on this success with Kazakhstan through continued cooperation in future projects that meet the nonproliferation goals of our countries and the international community."

This is NNSA's Global Threat Reduction Initiative's (GTRI) first Russian-origin HEU spent fuel removal project to be completed since President Obama outlined his nuclear security agenda in speech in Prague last month. It is the second project to be completed in the last year. In October 2008, NNSA removed 154.5-kilogram of Russian spent HEU from Hungary. Kazakhstan joins Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, and Uzbekistan as the first countries to return Russian-origin HEU spent fuel.

GTRI worked in close cooperation with Kazakhstan and Russia to return the material. Each shipment was packaged into Russian TUK-19 specialized transportation casks that were loaded into TK-5 railroad cars and transported under armed guard from Kazakhstan's Institute of Nuclear Physics to a secure facility in Russia. Upon arrival in Russia, the transportation casks were emptied, inspected, and returned to Kazakhstan to be loaded for the next shipment. The fourth and final shipment was completed in May 2009.

The shipments from Kazakhstan are in accordance with a prioritized, accelerated schedule developed from the February 2005 Bratislava Joint Statement on Nuclear Security Cooperation, which specifically called for international cooperation to return HEU fuel from U.S. and Russian-designed research reactors in other countries and to take other steps to reduce the threat of global nuclear terrorism.

GTRI's mission is to reduce and protect vulnerable nuclear and radiological materials located at civilian sites worldwide. With the successful completion of this shipment, a total of approximately 838 kilograms (1,844 lbs) of Russian-origin HEU spent and fresh fuel has been returned from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Libya, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.

A fact sheet on the GTRI is available at http://www.nnsa.energy.gov/news/2330.htm.

Established by Congress in 2000, NNSA is a semi-autonomous agency within the U.S. Department of Energy responsible for enhancing national security through the military application of nuclear science in the nation's national security enterprise. NNSA maintains and enhances the safety, security, reliability, and performance of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile without nuclear testing; reduces the global danger from weapons of mass destruction; provides the U.S. Navy with safe and effective nuclear propulsion; and responds to nuclear and radiological emergencies in the U.S. and abroad. Visit www.nnsa.energy.gov for more information.

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